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College and University Governing Board Members: Experiences and Attitudes

Report prepared for
The Chronicle of Higher Education

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NOTE: This report was originally written to be a working document for internal use by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* staff as they prepared a series of articles for the May 11, 2007 issue of the newspaper. For this reason it has no graphics, since the newspaper staff prepared graphics for their articles. We have made the report available in this version to survey respondents who requested it and to presidents who forwarded the survey to their governing board members, and it will also be available on our website.

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PROJECT OVERVIEW AND METHOD

Introduction

In 2005, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* commissioned a study of college and university presidents that was reported on in November of that year. The study went beyond the periodic surveys of presidents by the American Council on Education and focused on presidents' attitudes and opinions as well as the nuts and bolts of their position. It became evident both to the *Chronicle* editors and to us at Maguire Associates that the logical next step was to focus on the members of college and university governing boards.

Board members play a critical role in determining the direction of American higher education. Numerous trends, among them several high-profile breakdowns of board-president relationships and an expected wave of retirements of presidents over the next 5-10 years, make a study of this important but under-researched group particularly timely.

Method

Maguire Associates staff, in conjunction with consultant Alvin Sanoff and *Chronicle* editorial staff members, designed the survey to be conducted online (with an option to complete a paper survey if a respondent wished). Input was also invited and received from staff of the AGB and from several retired governing board members. We are most grateful to the AGB staff for suggesting a number of fruitful directions for inquiry and to the former board members who reviewed and commented on early survey drafts.

While clearly focused on board members, the survey was designed to parallel the presidents' survey in order to provide comparisons where possible. The governing board members' survey included questions on the following topics: current and previous board memberships; experiences as a board member; organization and work of the board; the relationship between the board and the president; characteristics of the institution; views on higher education in general; and demographics.

Our goal in recruiting survey respondents was to reach the governing board members of the same (originally 1,338) institutions that award baccalaureate degrees (with or without graduate level programs) that were the focus of the presidents' study.¹ It should be noted that when the focus shifts from presidents to governing boards the number of "institutions" decreases. The reason for this change is the substantial

¹ In the course of our work we found several institutions that had closed and one institution not included in the presidents' survey that nonetheless appeared to have met the criteria for inclusion.

number of multi-campus systems that have one governing board. This is the model for many, but not all, publicly supported colleges and universities.

Issuing invitations to participate in the study proved to be challenging because there is no national database of board members.² After exploring the feasibility of several options, we decided to conduct the entire recruitment campaign by email. Since governing board members' emails are no more available than their names and addresses, we decided to work through the president, chancellor, or other appropriate contact person for each school or system. We did this by sending each one an email from the Editor-in-Chief of the *Chronicle* explaining the study and asking him/her to forward the email study invitation to his/her governing board members.³ Specifically, we told presidents that "we would be most grateful if you or a member of your staff would copy the text below -- a letter to your board members -- into a new e-mail message and send it to the currently active voting members of your governing board."⁴

Because of the two-stage process that it required, this recruitment approach was not ideal: first, a president needed to receive the email and forward the invitation, and second, an individual governing board member had to decide to participate by going on-line and completing the survey (or requesting and completing a paper version). In order to maximize the possibility of responses, we updated the list of presidents and institutions (using web searches and telephone calls) and made sure we had a working email address for each president. We also worked with cooperating institutional staff members to get the email through where institutional security procedures had at first rejected the email.

The first recruiting email came from the Editor-in-Chief of the *Chronicle* and the first reminder came from John Maguire, the Chairman and founder of Maguire Associates. The final reminder to presidents came from the *Chronicle*. We also worked with staff in presidents' offices to provide paper copies for governing board members who did not have email addresses.

The multi-campus systems (mostly but not entirely public) introduce another sampling complication.⁵ Public boards are generally smaller than private boards. For this reason, several analyses will be reported separately by type of institutional affiliation: public, private non-denominational, and private religious.

² The Association of Governing Boards is a membership organization and could not be expected to have all of the 1,338 institutions as members. Accordingly, we decided not to ask them for their list. (It is also entirely possible that their privacy policies would have made their list unavailable to us anyway.)

³ This option was far more practical and cost-efficient than sending bundles of paper surveys to presidents' offices and asking staff to address and mail envelopes to their board members. In addition, it made sure that presidents, as gatekeepers to their governing boards, were aware of the study. We provided them with a link to view the survey on our website so that they knew what they were being asked to forward to their board members.

⁴ To reduce email security concerns, we included the text of the e-letter for governing board members in the main body of the email to presidents rather than as an attachment.

⁵ Respondents from multi-campus systems governed by a single board were asked to focus on the campus with which they were most familiar in answering questions about the campus or about their relationship with the president.

WHO RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY?

As a supplement to this report, we are providing copies (electronically) of the analyses on which our conclusions are based. In the reports of our findings below, either the table number from the statistical output (for group comparisons) or the question number from the Annotated Survey Instrument (for descriptive statistics about the board members) is shown in parentheses for ease of reference.

Below, we compare the demographic characteristics of the board members who replied and the college and university presidents who participated in our earlier study.

Overall Number of Respondents

A total of 1,478 governing board members responded to the survey. While the response rate for presidents (764 out of 1,338 or 57%) was exceptionally high, the overall response rate for governing board members who received the study invitation was closer to 22%,⁶ a quite respectable figure for a survey of this kind.

Gender

While 81% of the presidents in the 2005 survey were male, 63% of the governing board members were male (Q51).

Racial/Ethnic Group

The two groups are quite similar to each other in being overwhelmingly White. The second largest group is Black/African American/Afro-Caribbean, at approximately 6% for each group (Q53).

⁶ For details on how we estimated the response rate, see the Technical Appendix.

**Table 1: Ethnic Composition of Survey Respondents:
Governing Board Members and Institution Presidents**

Ethnicity	Board Members	Presidents
White	89.5%	88.6%
Black/African-American	5.5%	6.0%
<i>Prefer not to answer</i>	1.4%	2.6%
Hispanic/Latino	1.2%	1.3%
Asian	1.0%	0.7%
Multi-racial	0.5%	0.4%
<i>Not reported</i>	0.5%	0.0%
Native American	0.4%	0.4%

Age

There are more board members at the extremes of the age range (28% are over 65 versus 13% for presidents, while 16% are under 50 versus 6% of the presidents) than there are among the presidents (Q52). There are a number of retirees among the board members (27% of the sample, Q55), and some of the younger board members may be student or faculty representatives.

**Table 2: Age of Survey Respondents:
Governing Board Members and Institution Presidents**

Age Range	Board Members	Presidents
Under 40	4.4%	0.1%
40 – 49	11.4%	6.3%
50 – 59	34.2%	42.1%
60 – 65	21.7%	36.8%
Over 65	27.9%	13.4%
<i>Not Reported</i>	0.3%	1.3%

Highest Level of Education

Given that a doctorate (or in some cases a professional degree) is virtually a job requirement for most college presidents, it is not surprising to find that almost all of them have an advanced degree. However, board members are also highly educated; approximately two-thirds of them have an advanced degree (Q54).

**Table 3: Highest Degree Held among Survey Respondents:
Governing Board Members and Institution Presidents**

Degree Level	Board Members	Presidents
Less than Bachelor's degree	4.3%	0.0%
Bachelor's	28.1%	0.7%
Master's	33.0%	5.2%
Doctorate	13.7%	83.8%
Professional	18.6%	7.2%
Both doctoral and professional	1.4%	2.9%
Other	0.5%	0.0%
<i>Not Reported</i>	0.3%	0.3%

Religious Affiliation

The religious affiliation of the two groups is quite similar, with somewhat over half of each group identifying themselves as Protestant, and one-fourth of each group stating that they are Catholic (Q57).

**Table 4: Religious Affiliation of Survey Respondents:
Governing Board Members and Institution Presidents**

Religious Affiliation	Board Members	Presidents
Buddhist	0.3%	0.4%
Catholic	24.8%	25.5%
Hindu	0.1%	0.0%
Jewish	4.6%	5.1%
Muslim	0.1%	0.1%
Protestant	56.6%	55.2%
None	7.0%	10.6%
Other	4.2%	1.6%
Not Reported/Prefer not to answer	2.3%	1.4%

Political Affiliation

There is a large difference between the two groups in their reported political affiliations. Presidents are more likely to report being Democrats or Independents and much less likely to report being Republicans than are the board members (Q60). The political “gender gap” among board members is substantial. Thirty-eight percent of female board members are Democrats, while only 23% of males are (Table 3.37f).

**Table 5: Political Affiliation of Survey Respondents:
Governing Board Members and Institution Presidents**

	Board Members	Presidents
Democrat	28.4%	40.7%
Independent	10.9%	21.5%
Republican	41.7%	18.8%
Other party	0.1%	0.0%
Not registered	7.0%	8.6%
Prefer not to answer/Not Reported	11.9%	10.3%

Length of Service

The governing board members recently surveyed and the presidents we surveyed in 2005 had served very similar lengths of time; just over 50% of each group had been in their position between three and 10 years (Q5).

**Table 6: Length of Current Board Membership/Presidency:
Governing Board Members and Institution Presidents**

Time Period	Board Members	Presidents
Less than one year	10.1%	7.7%
1 – 2 years	14.7%	15.1%
3 – 5 years	27.4%	24.6%
6 – 10 years	25.7%	25.7%
More than 10 years	21.8%	27.0%
<i>Not Reported</i>	0.3%	0.0%

Other Characteristics of Governing Board Members

- Just under half of the board members reported having business occupations (either currently or prior to retirement); 19% were in education, 22% in professional services, and 9% reported other occupations (Q56). Female board members were more likely to be in education and less likely to be in business than were their male counterparts (Table 3.35f).
- From a list of options, board members indicated the degree to which they participate in various ways bring money and other resources to their institutions (Q 61):

Table 7: Ways of Bringing Financial and Other Resources to the Institution

Method of Contribution	Percent
I have made unrestricted cash donations.	82.5%
I have made restricted cash donations (e.g., for a named scholarship or specific capital expenditures).	50.7%
I have raised money or other donations from other individuals or organizations.	50.2%
I have provided in-kind services.	36.2%
I have named the institution as beneficiary of my will, insurance policies, annuities, etc.	29.3%
I have given stocks and/or bonds.	26.9%
I have donated tangible property (e.g., land, art objects).	7.2%
I have not brought in financial or other resources to my institution.	3.5%
Other	2.5%

Not surprisingly, the longer-serving board members were likely to engage in more of these activities (Table 3.38g).

Although board members who were alumni did not have higher income than the other members (Table 3.38h), alumni members were more likely to engage in most of the listed ways of bringing money and other resources to the institution (Table 3.38h).

- Board members are generally an affluent group, as the following table indicates (Q62). It seems likely that many of those at the lower levels of income are student representatives, faculty or staff representatives, or vowed members of a religious order.

**Table 8: Reported Pre-tax Current Annual Income of
Governing Board Members**

Income Level	Percent
Up to \$49,999	5.1%
\$50,000 through \$99,999	12.3%
\$100,000 through \$249,999	28.6%
\$250,000 through \$499,999	17.5%
\$500,000 through \$999,999	9.9%
\$1M through \$4.99M	8.3%
\$5M and over	1.5%
Prefer not to answer/ Not Reported	16.8%

GOVERNING BOARD MEMBER PARTICIPATION

Board members were asked a number of questions concerning such matters as how they came to serve on the board, their meeting attendance pattern, how much time they spend on board business, and their area of expertise.

- The three most commonly reported routes to becoming a board member were a recommendation by the president (37%), recommendation by another board member (31%), and appointment by an elected public official (11%) (Q10).
- Over one third of the board members reported having previously served as a board member before their current board membership (Q2).
- The great majority (91%) of governing board members reported currently serving on just one college or university governing board (Q1).
- Sixty-four percent represented the board of a single-campus institution, while another 24% represented boards of institutions with other structures (and another 12% did not specify) (Q4).
- Twenty-one percent of the respondents reported being an officer of the board (Q6); of these, 34% were the Chair, 25% the Vice Chair, 14% the Secretary, 22% the Chair of a committee, and 6% reported other positions such as Treasurer (Q6a). Officers of the board were not more likely to be alumni than were non-officers (Table 3.5j).
- Seventy percent serve on more than one committee of the board (Q7).
- Board members sometimes formally represent a constituency (alumni/ae, 13%; church-related body, 13%; students 3%; Faculty, 2%; staff, 1%; and other groups, 7%) (Q8).
- Fifty-seven percent are graduates of the institution that they serve (Q9); board members of private non-denominational schools are more likely to be alumni (66%) than those of public (51%) or religious schools (54%) (Table 3.5d).
- Female board members were more likely to be alumni than male board members were (Table 3.5f).
- Over half of the board members travel more than 50 miles to attend meetings (Q12), and 70% report attending more than 90% of the meetings of the full board (Q13).
- Most board members spend either 0-5 hours a month (42%) or 6-10 hours a month (35%) on board business (Q11). Not surprisingly, officers report working more hours (41% work 11 or more hours a month) (Table 3.7j).
- Many board members characterized their primary area of expertise on the board as in one way or another related to money: budget issues/management (24%); fund raising (9%) or investment strategies for endowment (6%). Other primary areas of expertise included academics (19%); long-term strategic planning (16%); marketing/public relations (11%); and other areas such as facilities and legal affairs (11%) (Q15).

- Board members have a variety of sources of information available to them to assist them in their work, and they provided ratings of how important these information sources are to them (Q58).

Table 9: Importance of Sources of Information to Board Members

Information Source	Mean
Briefings from your institution’s president	4.68
Briefings from your board chair	4.34
Association of Governing Boards (AGB) print or online materials	2.98
<i>The Chronicle of Higher Education</i> - print	2.65
BoardSource	2.17
<i>The Chronicle of Higher Education</i> - online	2.15
Briefings from state governor or agency (public institutions only)	2.06

Scale: 1 = Not at All Important to 5 = Extremely Important

When briefings come either from the institution’s president or from the board chair, they are by far more important to board members than any print or online materials. Briefings from the governor or state agency are the least important of the seven sources tested (Q58). For all of the listed sources except for BoardSource, female board members gave higher importance ratings than male board members did (Table 3.36f).

BOARD MEMBER PREPARATION FOR THEIR WORK

Overall Level of Preparation

Board members felt much less prepared for their first board membership than presidents did for their first presidency (Q3).

Table 10: Level of Preparation for First Board Membership/Presidential Job: Governing Board Members and Institution Presidents

Degree of Preparation	Board Members	Presidents
Very Well	14.5%	40.6%
Moderately Well	44.7%	46.2%
Slightly Well	30.2%	10.1%
Not at all Well	9.8%	1.7%
<i>Not Reported</i>	0.8%	1.4%

The asymmetry is striking, with fewer than 15% of board members versus 41% of presidents describing themselves as having been “very well” prepared, while 40% of board members and only 12% of presidents considered themselves to have been “slightly” or “not at all” well prepared.

Board members felt quite well prepared for certain aspects of their work, such as dealing with the president, and less well prepared for other aspects such as campus politics and dealing with legislators and other political officials (Q14).

Table 11: Level of Preparedness for Various Aspect of Board Work

Element of Work	Mean
Dealing with the president (or chancellor, or equivalent)	4.31
The amount of work expected of you	4.08
Long-term strategic planning	3.98
Expectations for donations from you	3.93
Budgetary issues	3.81
Enrollment issues	3.72
Dealing with student issues (student life, facilities, etc.)	3.66
Dealing with alumni issues	3.60
Dealing with faculty issues	3.48
Fund raising	3.45
Campus politics	3.15
Dealing with legislators and other political (local or regional) officials	3.00

Scale: 1 = Not at All Prepared to 5 = Very Well Prepared

On their survey, presidents had been asked to identify the issues for which they had felt most unprepared as they began their current presidency. The following issues were most frequently mentioned:

- fund-raising (18%);
- budgetary issues (11%);
- dealing with legislators and other public officials (11%); and
- dealing with the board or other governing body (10%).

Common to both groups was the challenge of fund-raising and dealing with public officials. However, board members expressed a high level of confidence that they were well prepared for dealing with presidents, while 10% of presidents picked dealing with their governing board as the issue for which they were least well prepared.

What Characteristics are Associated with the Level of Preparation of Board Members?

While board members reported moderate levels of preparation, there were differences among them. Those who felt best prepared overall (rating of 5 on a five-point scale):

- were somewhat less likely to be an officer (Table 3.3b);⁷
- were more satisfied with a number of aspects of their experience on the board (e.g., how their time was used) and reported a higher level of satisfaction overall (Table 3.13b);
- gave higher marks to the board’s procedure for orientation and training of new members and for a total of nine out of 12 areas of board accomplishments (Table 3.15b);
- were more likely to have a doctoral degree (Table 3.34b) and to work in the field of education (Table 3.35b); and
- were likely to give a relatively higher rating to both the print and online versions of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* as information sources (though these ratings overall were not high⁸) (Table 3.36b).

The least well prepared (“slightly” or “not at all well prepared”):

- were less likely to report an “excellent” relationship with the president (though even in this group, 56% reported an “excellent” relationship) (Table 3.25b); and
- were more likely to report challenges of poor communication with the president and unrealistically high expectations for donations from board members (though again, all groups gave quite low ratings to these problems) (Table 3.26b).

With respect to preparation for specific areas of work on the board, those who had been board members for longer periods of time were more likely to report having been better prepared for the amount of work, the expectation for donations, and dealing with budgetary issues (Table 3.8g).

⁷ Most likely this occurred because officers had generally been on the board a longer period of time (Table 3.3j) and those who had served longer were more likely to report a low level of preparation (Table 3.1g). That newer board members feel better prepared could mean one of two things: either that boards are now doing a better job or preparation than they used to, or that newer members haven’t been serving long enough to fully understand what they don’t know!

⁸ By far the most highly rated information sources among those listed were “briefings from your institution’s president” and “briefing from your board chair.”

JOB SATISFACTION

Overall Level of Satisfaction

The overwhelming majority (94%) of both board members and presidents would choose to do the job again, and only 4% of each group was uncertain (Q18). When they rated their “overall satisfaction” with their job on a scale from 1 = “not at all” to 5 = “highly satisfied,” board members gave an average rating of 4.32 (Q19, last item), while the presidents’ average rating was 4.34.

Along with their overall satisfaction, board members were asked to describe their satisfaction with various elements of their board experience (Q19):

Table 12: Board Members’ Satisfaction with Elements of Board Experience

Dimension	Mean
The quality of information provided to the board by the president	4.39
The degree to which board members adhere to confidentiality requirements	4.25
The degree to which your contributions to the work of the board are valued	4.17
The overall effectiveness of board management and organization	4.07
How your time as a board member is used	4.04
The size of your board	3.96

Scale: 1 = Not at All Satisfied to 5 = Highly Satisfied

Again, high levels of satisfaction are expressed, with all but one element receiving a mean rating over 4.0 (Q19).

Factors Associated with Board Member Satisfaction

Among the 1,478 board members surveyed, 674 said they were “highly satisfied” (rating = 5) overall with their board experience. We examined the data to see what differentiated this most satisfied group from those who expressed lesser degrees of satisfaction. The most satisfied:

- felt better prepared for board membership (Table 3.8a);
- had been on the board for a longer time (Table 3.3a) and were more likely to be an officer (Table 3.3a);
- worked more hours per month on the board and attended a higher percentage of meetings (Table 3.7a);
- were more involved in fund raising and in strategic planning (Table 3.16a);

- gave higher ratings to their satisfaction with experiences on the board (Table 3.13a) and to the accomplishments of the board (Table 3.15a) and reported very low levels of problems on the board (Table 3.26a); and
- were more likely to characterize their institution as financially healthy (Table 3.29a).

Public institution board members reported less satisfaction in most respects (except for the size of the board) (Table 3.13d). There were no significant differences in satisfaction associated with the type of degrees awarded by the institution (Table 3.13e).

Perhaps the single factor most strongly associated with satisfaction is the relationship with the president. Eighty-one percent of the most satisfied board members report an “excellent” quality of relationship with the president, while only 48% of the less satisfied board members do so (Table 3.25a). The most satisfied board members also report more frequent communication with the president (Table 3.18a).

Taking all of these findings together, it is clear that the most satisfied board members are also the most engaged.

ORGANIZATION AND WORK OF THE BOARD

We asked a number of questions about how the board organizes itself and its work.

- Over two-thirds of the boards have between 21 and 40 members (Q20).
- Seventy-one percent of members report that their boards meet three or four times per year (Q21).
- The great majority (86%) of respondents said that their board had a procedure and standards for dealing with conflicts of interest; however, 10% were unsure if their board had such standards and another 3% said their board did not have these standards. Of those with conflict of interest standards, 96% felt that these standards were applied appropriately (Q22, 22a).
- Sixty-nine percent report serving on boards that have term limits; 12% have a mandatory retirement age, and 15% report having a required annual donation (minimum \$1, maximum \$25,000, average \$5,100, median \$5,000, among those who specified an amount) (Q25).

Board members were asked how often they dealt with certain types of issues. The issues they were most likely to consider at least quarterly were: budget/finance (77%); fund raising (68%); relations with the president or chancellor (67%); and maintaining academic quality (61%). Twenty-eight percent reported dealing with the president or chancellor at least monthly (Q24).

Presidents were asked a similar question. For them, the following issues occupied them at least once a week: fund raising (91% of presidents); budget/finance (88%); personnel (77%); student life (74%); and educational leadership (73%). Sixty percent reported that relations with their governing board occupied them at least once a week. Taken together, the two sets of allocation of time make it clear that financial issues take the largest amount of time for both presidents and their governing boards.

Board members provided ratings for how well the board accomplishes certain tasks. As the “overall rating of how well the board accomplishes its duties” indicates, board members generally feel that their board is doing well. However, there is a wide range of ratings across the different tasks (Q23).

Table 13: Ratings of Board Task Accomplishments

Tasks	Mean
Maintaining good communications with the institution’s president (or chancellor)	4.57
Getting along with each other despite disagreements	4.46
Having well organized, productive meetings	4.29
Maintaining a good relationship with the university’s fund-raising foundation(s), office, or fiscal agent	4.28
Overall rating of how well the board accomplishes its duties	4.20
Striking a balance between appropriate oversight and micromanagement	4.12
Having good procedures for evaluating the president	4.08
Staying abreast of relevant legal issues	4.04
Obtaining and providing financial support for the institution (getting donations both from others and from board members)	3.91
Having good procedures for the orientation and training of new board members	3.64
Having good procedures for evaluating the performance of board members	3.11
Having clear procedures for the removal of a member, if necessary	2.94

Scale: 1 = Not at All Well to 5 = Extremely Well

It is striking that the relatively weakest areas are in the boards’ own management procedures: orientation and training, evaluation, and, if necessary, removing a member. It is also noteworthy that obtaining and providing financial support – commonly regarded as a key board task – is not among the strongest areas.

Public board members gave lower ratings than the other groups on 11 out of 12 of these dimensions (Table 3.15d). Perhaps surprisingly, only one item out of the 12 differentiated board officers from other members; on “obtaining and providing financial support for the institution” the officers actually gave a *lower* rating (Table 3.15j).

Two items, both relating directly to board functioning, were rated more highly by board members whose institutions had female presidents versus male presidents: having good procedures for orienting and training new members and having good procedures for evaluating board members (Table 3.15i).

Governing boards face a number of challenges, and we asked respondents to rate the degree to which nine different issues are a challenge for their board. The most striking finding is how generally low the degree of reported challenges is. Relatively speaking, the biggest challenge is the expectation to raise funds. The least problematic challenge is a “difficult relationship between the board chair and the president” (Q39). Though the absolute ratings were still low, public board members gave higher ratings than the other two groups for seven out of nine of the items (Table 3.16d).

Table 14: Ratings of Challenges for the Board

Challenges	Mean
Unrealistically high expectations for fund raising	1.83
Divisions among members about policy, programs, budget, etc.	1.77
Unrealistically high expectations for donations from board	1.77
Divisions between board and president about policy, programs, budget, etc.	1.61
Board tends to “micromanage” the president	1.55
Divisions among board members about the performance of the president	1.50
Poor communications between board and the president	1.49
Disagreements between board and president concerning the appropriate role of the board	1.41
Difficult relationship between board chair and president	1.22

Scale: 1 = Not a Challenge to 5 = A Great Challenge

Respondents were asked to describe the “greatest challenge now facing your board” (Q26). The most commonly mentioned challenges occurred in the following areas:

- fund raising/capital campaign;
- budget issues/balancing budget/finances/”funding”;
- enrollment/enrollment management, retention;
- finding a new president (or anticipating the need to)/leadership transition/succession planning;
- managing growth of the institution/long-term strategic planning; and
- board organization/interaction.

The following quotes capture some of the flavor of these comments.

Money Issues

“Finding major donors to launch our new capital campaign and the cash to begin the major renovation of our new science center.”

“Decreasing state financial contributions as costs rise, applications increase and the need for seats grows.”

“Helping the president, provost and faculty develop strong financial support for an exciting new program initiative. More structurally, ensuring perpetual institutional renewal.”

”So many great opportunities before us - so little money.”

“Our institution has experienced serious financial difficulties...although most are behind us now. The board, however, has had difficulty recognizing the need to transition from a draconian financial watchdog board to a more balanced academic and financial management group.”

Enrollment

“Keeping the student body number within the available accommodations – neither too many nor too few students”

“How to increase academic quality by attracting student with higher academic indicators, while keeping the institution’s budget in balance since students with higher academic credentials require higher scholarships.”

Finding a New President

“Our president is retiring...having accomplished much. We...seek a new president to build on the current foundation and take the institution to the next level in many dimensions. We see it as both a challenge and an opportunity for the institution.”

Growth/Planning

“Developing a culture of long-range planning on the board and establishing a plan, not just for a one-time planning process, but as a long-range stewardship tool.”

“Recognizing the changing dynamics of how students learn today and as such adapting the services, infrastructure and curriculum in order to attract and retain students.”

Board Issues

“Selection of new trustees relies too heavily on trustees’ net worth [versus] talent and time to devote to board issues.”

“Establishing a more diverse board that is not as dependent on alumni”

“Our board is too large to be effective. Because of our size we are forced to only deal with the things that apply to our committee and do not really manage the policies of the entire institution, only of our subset.”

In their survey, presidents had been asked to describe the “single greatest challenge you face in your job.” The most frequently occurring responses, shown in descending order, were classified as follows:

- fundraising;
- time management/managing priorities;
- carrying out vision/strategic plan/getting everyone on board;
- enrollment management;
- finances/fiscal management; and
- securing resources/succeeding with limited resources.

Not surprisingly, a number of these themes are similar to the matters that provide the greatest challenges for board members.

GOVERNING BOARDS AND THEIR PRESIDENTS

Survey participants were asked a number of questions concerning the president of their institution.

- The presidents on whom board members reported had been in office across a wide range of times: up to 2 years (25%); 3-5 years (28%); 6-10 years (24%) and more than 10 years (22%) (Q27).
- Only 4% of the presidents were described as being interim appointees (Q28).
- Twenty-five percent of the presidents were female (Q29). When the institution's president is female, 58% of the board members are female; with a male president, only 29% of the board members are female (Table 3.34i).
- There is no difference in the proportions of male and female board members associated with institutional affiliation (public, private non-denominational or religious). However, there are gender differences at the religious schools. Among the female board members 45% were at Catholic institutions 48% were at other denominational Christian institutions, while among male board members only 29% were at Catholic institutions and 63% were at other denominational institutions (Table 3.27f).

Board members reported fairly frequent contact with their presidents and rated their working relationship with the president quite highly.

- Fifty-six percent of board members reported communicating at least monthly with their president about institutional matters (Q30).
- Sixty-three percent of board members rated the quality of their working relationship with their president as "excellent," while another 27% chose "very good." Just over 2% chose either "fair" or "poor" (Q38). There were no significant differences in the ratings given to male and female presidents (Table 3.25i).
- In the earlier survey of presidents, we asked presidents to rate the importance of various different indicators by which they would define their own success. We also asked the governing board members how they would evaluate their president's success, using all of these same indicators and adding two more. The two sets of ratings are shown below in descending order for the governing board members. For items in common, the rank order of the ratings given by each group is shown in parentheses.

**Table 15: Criteria for Defining President’s Success:
Governing Board Members and Institution Presidents**

Criterion	Board Members	Presidents
Promoting the mission of the institution	4.71 [highest]	[not in survey]
Excellent quality of educational programs	4.58 (1)	4.66 (2)
Quality of the faculty	4.50 (2)	4.59 (3)
Having a balanced budget	4.41 (3)	4.74 (1)
Good faculty and staff morale	4.33 (4.5 tie)	4.34 (5)
Good relations with constituent groups (e.g., alumni, parents, etc.)	4.33 (4.5 tie)	4.29 (8)
Meeting fund-raising goals	4.26 (6)	4.55 (4)
Improved retention and graduation rates	4.21 (7)	4.32 (7)
Good student morale	4.20 (8)	4.33 (6)
Favorable publicity	3.94 (9)	3.90 (11)
Quality and size of the freshman class	3.88 (10.5 tie)	4.27 (9)
Good town/gown relations	3.88 (10.5 tie)	3.92 (10)
Good record of student placement (e.g., in jobs, admission to graduate programs, etc.)	3.77 (12)	3.79 (12)
Improved <i>US News</i> rankings	3.27 (13)	2.86 (13)
Increased research grants and contracts	3.26 [lowest]	[not in survey]

Scale: 1 = Not at all Important in Defining Success to 5 = Extremely Important

The only absolute rating that was significantly higher for governing board members than for presidents was “improved *US News* rankings;” although both groups ranked this item the lowest (of the items in common), presidents were perhaps more actively disavowing it. With respect to the ratings, the largest differences favoring presidents were in “having a balanced budget,” “meeting fund-raising goals,” and “quality and size of the freshman class.” All three of these may be said to relate to financial issues, as the size of the freshman class is crucial, at least for many tuition-driven institutions. While these issues are also important to governing board members, they reserve their highest ratings for “excellent quality of educational programs” and “quality of the faculty” (among the items asked of both groups).

The rank orders of the two lists of items within each group are quite similar. The largest difference is “good relations with constituent groups,” which is relatively more important to governing board members than it is to presidents (even though the absolute ratings are similar).

Several of the segmentation analyses add an additional dimension to understanding how board members evaluate presidents. For all but three of these items concerning the president’s success, female board members gave

higher ratings (closer to the ratings given by the presidents themselves) than male board members did (Table 3.19f). For board members who had more experience, meeting fundraising goals and balancing the budget were more important than they were for less experienced members (Table 3.19g). For board members who were alumni, quality of the faculty, good relationships with constituent groups, and increased *US News* ranking were more important than they were for non-alumni (Table 3.19h). Gender of the president did not make a difference in these ratings (Table 3.19i).

- Board members rated the likelihood that certain problems would cost the president his or her job.

Table 16: What Could Cost the President His or Her Job

Issue	Mean
Personal scandal	4.51
Keeping information from the board	4.38
Failure to balance the budget over several years	3.85
Lack of good communication skills	3.72
Poor faculty morale	3.55
Failure to meet fund-raising goals	3.25

Scale: 1 = Not at All Likely to 5 = Extremely Likely

The issues most likely to threaten the president’s continued employment focus more on matters that violate relationships and mutual trust than on performance issues. Given the importance attributed to fund raising both by presidents (in their survey) and by governing board members, the relatively moderate rating given to that matter here is surprising.

- Thirty-one percent of governing board members reported that at some time they had been on a college or university board that was dissatisfied with a president (Q16).⁹ This percentage rises to 53% among those who have been on the board for 10 years or more (Table 3.10g). Length of service presumably has given them more opportunity for an occasion to be dissatisfied, but this same group reports a higher quality of relationship with the current president (Table 3.25g).
- When those who have been dissatisfied with a president were asked how the situation was resolved, they indicated which of a variety of approaches were used (respondents could pick more than one) (Q16a):

⁹ Since the question asked if this situation had arisen “at any time,” it does not provide an index of the level of dissatisfaction with *current* presidents in this sample of governing board members. It does indicate that dissatisfaction with a president is not a rare event in board members’ careers.

Table 17: Methods of Resolving Difficulties with a President

Method of Resolution	Percent
President chose to retire earlier than planned	30.8%
President was terminated before the end of his/her contract	27.5%
Worked with the president and resolved the situation satisfactorily	17.8%
Contract was not renewed	15.8%
Put president on notice that if there was no improvement he or she would be asked to leave	13.6%
President found a post elsewhere	13.2%
Other	6.6%

Several of the questions related to the board’s procedural approaches in dealing with the president and his/her contract.

- Most presidents are assessed annually (75%); others are evaluated at the time of contract renewal (8%) or when the board determines that there is a need (7%) (Q34).
- Likewise, the president’s compensation tends to be reviewed annually (72%), at the time of contract renewal (15%), or when the board determines there is a need (4%) (Q35).
- While 71% reported that comparative data were used to help determine the president’s compensation, 23% did not know the answer to this question (Q36). Non-officers were particularly out of the loop; 28% of them (versus 8% of the officers) did not know the answer to this question (Table 3.23j).
- Among those where comparative data were used, multiple sources such as data collected by board members and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* were used (Q36a).
- Fifty-one percent reported that the president’s compensation package is voted on by the whole board, while 40% said that the Executive Committee or a subcommittee made this decision (and another 5% said that the board had no role in determining the president’s salary) (Q37).

With respect to presidential searches, board members were most likely to express a preference for playing a more important role than a search firm (Q32).

Table 18: Preferred Degree of Board Involvement in Presidential Search Process

Search Process Procedure	Percent
Search firm does some work, but a board-appointed committee plays the major role	47.2%
Search firm does much of the work, but board is involved in selecting the short list of candidates and making the final choice	29.8%
A board-appointed committee conducts the search and the whole board makes the final decision	19.4%
Other (e.g., a church body makes the decision)	1.5%
<i>Not Reported</i>	1.2%
Search firm does almost everything but board makes the final selection	0.9%

Board members were asked, “What is the single most important question you would ask of a candidate for president of your institution?” To this open-ended question there were at least 50 responses in each of the following categories (shown in descending order of frequency) (Q33):

- understanding of/commitment to the institution’s mission;
- vision for the institution;
- knowledge about institution/personal interest in this position;
- qualifications/previous success/relevant experience, “Why you?”
- goals/priorities; and
- experience/skills in fund raising.

For church-related institutions, the mission question is directly related to the religious tradition of the institution.

“What is your commitment to Christian values in higher education?”

“Is he/she in complete agreement with the doctrinal, theological, and historical positions of our sponsoring church denomination?”

More generally, questions in the area of mission focus around the mission as defined by the institution itself.

“Are you ready, willing and able to enthusiastically advance the college’s Mission and Aspiration Statement and strategic plan, and work cooperatively with all relevant college constituencies to develop and implement new visions and goals?”

“Please articulate what you understand to be the mission of the college and explain how you would help advance our mission.”

Vision questions were much like the following.

“What do you see as your vision for the future of the university and how would you propose getting there?”

“What is your 5 year and 10 year vision for this institution?”

Examples of questions focused on knowledge about the institution and personal interest in the position include the following.

“Why do you care about being president of my institution?”

“Questions related to his/her understanding of the university (as gained throughout the interview process), including weaknesses and strengths of the institution and his/her experience in dealing with same.”

“Why do you really want this job?”

Board members wanted to know about previous successes and why the candidate thought he or she was qualified for the position.

“Would you describe the experiences you have had in the past that have prepared you for all that is expected from a college president and provide evidence that you could successfully meet those challenges at our institution?”

“What knowledge do you have of higher education issues and what management experience do you have, and what would those who know you best have to say about your daily attitude in general?”

“How have you solved the three major problems/issues at your current institution over the last ____ years?”

“What in your past have you accomplished that would lead the board to believe that you can increase enrollment in a declining market with increased competition?”

“Why are you the right candidate for this university at this specific point in time?”

Questions about goals and priorities emphasized making choices about what to address, and when.

“How would you determine the strategic priorities our college should be addressing?”

“What do you feel are the 3 most important things you need to focus on to be a successful president; stated differently, on what 3 areas will you spend most of your time?”

Governing board members want to know about a potential president’s track record in fund raising.

“Give me some examples of creative fund raising.”

“Have you directed a capital campaign?”

“How do you plan to encourage the alumni to become more active in giving to the annual fund?”

“How he or she can relate to funding sources, especially legislature and governor and business.”

“How much money have you raised previously?”

CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS' INSTITUTIONS

Fifteen percent of the respondents reported being on the boards of publicly supported institutions, while 31% were on the board of a private non-denominational school, and 53% represented a private religiously-affiliated school (Q40). Relative to the presidents' survey there is a smaller proportion of public institutions represented because public boards in general are smaller than private boards, and public board members often have oversight over multi-campus systems but were asked to focus on only one institution in answering the questions that were specific to institutions and presidents. In the presidents' study each individual public institution could be represented.¹⁰

Among the institutions identified as religiously-affiliated by governing board members, there were the following: 35% Catholic; 58% other denominational Christian (e.g., Episcopal, Baptist); 7% non-denominational Christian; and 0.5% other (Q40a). Within the religious schools, Catholic institutions were much more likely to have doctoral programs, and other denominational institutions much less likely to do so (Table 3.27e).

Public board members were by far the least likely to have been on their board for 10 or more years (Table 3.27g).

The average enrollment figure was 5,554 and the median enrollment was 2,000 (Q42). The degrees offered by the institutions represented were described as follows (Q41):

Table 19: Degrees Offered at Respondents' Institutions

Degree(s)	Percent
Grants master's and doctoral degrees as well as baccalaureate degrees	28.9%
Grants master's – but not doctoral – degrees as well as baccalaureate degrees	42.3%
Grants baccalaureate degrees but not master's or doctoral degrees	26.6%
Other (e.g., bachelor's plus 1 graduate program, or mostly associate and some baccalaureate degrees)	1.5%
<i>Not Reported</i>	0.7%

¹⁰ The population of institutions for the presidents' survey was reported to be 37% public, 28% private non-denominational, and 35% religiously-affiliated institutions, according to the database we used at the time of that survey. Among the 764 presidents who responded, these percentages were: 35% public, 23% private non-denominational, and 42% private religious. In the course of working on the governing board members' survey we discovered that the 35% population figure for religious schools was an undercount. We therefore cross-checked school affiliations with the Higher Education Publications Directory and the *U.S. News* listings and resolved disagreements by checking institutions' web sites. The corrected percentages for the 1,338 schools in the original population for the presidents' study are 37%, 23%, and 40%, for public, private non-denominational and private religious, respectively. These corrected figures suggest that the institutional affiliations of the responding presidents were even more similar to the population from which they came than it had appeared at the time of the presidents' study.

Based on the U.S. state in which the institution was reported to be located, institutions were classified into U.S. Census regions both for the governing board members' survey and for the presidents' survey (Q43):

**Table 20: Census Region of Institution:
Governing Board Members and Institution Presidents**

Census Region	Board Members	Presidents
Northeast	29.2%	24.0%
Midwest	32.6%	30.2%
South	25.4%	32.1%
West	11.1%	12.0%
<i>Not Reported</i>	1.7%	1.7%

Compared to the presidents surveyed, responding board members were somewhat more likely be affiliated with an institution in the Northeast and less likely to represent an institution from the South. One reason for this difference might be the relatively larger number of private institutions (that tend to have larger boards) in the Northeast and the relatively large number of public institutions (that have smaller boards) in the South.

A majority of governing board members in public (62%), private non-denominational (63%) and private religious schools (60%) characterize the financial health of their institution as “somewhat healthy – there are some potential threats.” The differences across the three types of institution were not statistically significant (Table 3.29d).

Table 21: Financial Health of the Institution – by Institutional Affiliation

Financial Condition	Type of Institution		
	Public	Private Non-denominational	Private Religious
Very healthy	29.5%	24.1%	28.9%
Somewhat healthy - there are some potential threats	62.1%	63.0%	60.0%
Not healthy - action must be taken soon to improve the situation	6.6%	10.9%	8.2%
Endangered - the institution is at risk of having to be closed	.4%	1.3%	1.3%
<i>Not Reported</i>	1.3%	.7%	1.7%

Longer-serving board members were more likely to characterize the institution as “very healthy” than those with shorter service did (Table 3.29g).

On the other hand, there are substantial differences in opinions about tuition discounting across the three types of institution (Table 3.29d).

Table 22: Opinion on Tuition Discounting – by Institutional Affiliation

Opinion about Tuition Discounting	Type of Institution		
	Public	Private Non-denominational	Private Religious
The discount rate is too high.	5.2%	33.4%	24.8%
The discount rate is about right.	27.7%	42.7%	50.7%
The discount rate is too low.	4.4%	4.2%	4.6%
My institution does not discount tuition.	26.4%	4.4%	2.1%
I do not have an opinion about this question.	34.3%	14.2%	16.3%
<i>Not Reported</i>	1.8%	1.1%	1.4%

Respondents from public institutions are much more likely either to say that their institution does not discount tuition or that they have no opinion on the question. Governing board members from private non-denominational schools are more likely to say that the discount rate is too high, and those from religious schools are more likely to say that the discount rate is about right. Very few respondents in any group believe that the discount rate is too low.

Both governing board members and presidents provided ratings on the degree to which various issues were a concern at their campus. Issues were grouped into several categories: faculty, student, financial, and enrollment. The striking pattern in these findings is that, for all but the issue of “competition from for-profit colleges,” presidents express more concern about these issues than governing board members do. All of the differences shown, with the exception of “lack of economic diversity among students” and “rising cost of student services and student facilities,” are statistically significant (although some of them are relatively small in an absolute sense). The rank orders (computed within each topic and shown in parentheses) are, for the most part, similar between board members and presidents (Q46).

**Table 23: Concern about Issues Facing Higher-Education Institutions:
Governing Board Members and Institution Presidents**

Area of Concern	Board Members	Presidents
Faculty Issues		
Inadequate faculty salaries	3.31 (1)	3.82 (1)
Insufficient racial/ethnic diversity among the faculty	2.88 (2)	3.72 (2)
Quality of faculty	2.47 (3)	3.20 (3)
Too many part-time faculty members	2.15 (4)	2.64 (4)
Lack of political and philosophical diversity among the faculty	2.11 (5)	2.23 (5)
Student Issues		
Lack of racial and ethnic diversity among students	2.68 (1)	2.93 (2)
Insufficient academic preparation for college among students	2.49 (2)	3.25 (1)
Lack of economic diversity among students	2.35 (3)	2.43 (3)
Lack of political and philosophical diversity among students	2.21 (4)	2.35 (4)
Financial Issues		
Rising health care costs	3.80 (1)	4.29 (1)
Rising cost of student services and student facilities	3.69 (2)	3.73 (4)
Rising tuition	3.66 (3)	3.93 (2.5, tie)
Cost of technology	3.65 (4)	3.93 (2.5, tie)
Decline in federal support	3.23 (5)	3.42 (6)
Decline in state support	3.17 (6)	3.63 (5)
Competition from for-profit colleges	2.90 (7)	2.72 (7)
Enrollment Concerns		
Balancing financial aid costs with student needs	3.58 (1)	3.94 (2)
Student retention	3.43 (2)	3.98 (1)
Improving the academic profile of entering students	3.20 (3)	3.58 (3)
Ability to meet enrollment targets	3.16 (4)	3.53 (4)
Overcrowding	2.32 (5)	2.51 (5)

Scale: 1 = Not a Concern at my Institution to 5 = Very Great Concern

We expected that board members of public, private non-denominational and religious institutions might well differ in their perspectives on faculty, student, financial and

enrollment issues. Therefore, we compared board members' ratings on this same set of potential institutional issues across the three types of institutional affiliation (Table 3.30d).

**Table 24a: Concern about Issues Facing Higher-Education Institutions:
By Institutional Affiliation – Faculty Issues**

Faculty Issue	Type of Institution			Significant Differences
	Public (1)	Private Non-denominational (2)	Private Religious (3)	
Quality of faculty	2.79	2.36	2.44	1>2,3
Inadequate faculty salaries	3.28	3.28	3.34	Not Significant
Insufficient racial/ethnic diversity among the faculty	2.78	2.98	2.86	Not Significant
Too many part-time faculty members	2.27	2.09	2.14	Not Significant
Lack of political and philosophical diversity among the faculty	2.38	2.17	2.00	1>3

Scale: 1 = Not a Concern at my Institution to 5 = Very Great Concern

Governing board members of publicly supported institutions express relatively more concern about the quality of the faculty and about political and philosophical diversity among faculty than other board members do. However, for this group of items only the concern about faculty salaries is rated above the midpoint on the five-point scale.

**Table 24b: Concern about Issues Facing Higher-Education Institutions:
By Institutional Affiliation – Student Issues**

Student Issue	Type of Institution			Significant Differences
	Public (1)	Private Non-denominational (2)	Private Religious (3)	
Lack of economic diversity among students	2.27	2.37	2.36	Not Significant
Lack of racial and ethnic diversity among students	2.56	2.77	2.65	Not Significant
Lack of political and philosophical diversity among students	2.23	2.28	2.16	Not Significant
Insufficient academic preparation for college among students	2.96	2.33	2.44	1>2,3

Scale: 1 = Not a Concern at my Institution to 5 = Very Great Concern

Student issues are not a matter of great concern for board members at any of the types of institution (all ratings are below 3.0 on the five-point scale). However, board members in publicly supported institutions express much more concern about students' academic preparation for college than do the board members at either type of private institution.

**Table 24c: Concern about Issues Facing Higher-Education Institutions:
By Institutional Affiliation – Financial Issues**

Financial Issue	Type of Institution			Significant Differences
	Public (1)	Private Non-denominational (2)	Private Religious (3)	
Rising tuition	3.91	3.56	3.65	1>2,3
Competition from for-profit colleges	2.64	2.63	3.13	3>1,2
Decline in federal support	3.64	2.87	3.31	1>2,3; 3>2
Decline in state support	4.28	2.68	3.13	1>2,3; 3>2
Cost of technology	3.75	3.55	3.68	Not Significant
Rising health care costs	3.95	3.66	3.83	1>2
Rising cost of student services and student facilities	3.80	3.59	3.71	Not Significant

Scale: 1 = Not a Concern at my Institution to 5 = Very Great Concern

Not surprisingly, governing board members of publicly supported institutions express much more concern about declines in federal and (especially) state support. Increases in tuition and rising health care costs also concern them more. Board members from the private religious institutions express more concern about competition from for-profit schools.

**Table 24d: Concern about Issues Facing Higher-Education Institutions:
By Institutional Affiliation – Enrollment Concerns**

Enrollment Concern	Type of Institution			Significant Differences
	Public (1)	Private Non-denominational (2)	Private Religious (3)	
Ability to meet enrollment targets	2.81	3.12	3.28	3>1
Overcrowding	2.37	2.25	2.34	Not Significant
Balancing financial aid costs with student needs	3.42	3.55	3.63	Not Significant
Improving the academic profile of entering students	3.26	3.15	3.21	Not Significant
Student retention	3.52	3.37	3.44	Not Significant

Scale: 1 = Not a Concern at my Institution to 5 = Very Great Concern

Board members from the private religious schools express more concern about their ability to meet enrollment targets than board members from publicly supported schools do.

ATTITUDES AND PERSPECTIVES OF GOVERNING BOARD MEMBERS AND INSTITUTION PRESIDENTS

Both the governing board members' survey and the presidents' survey contained several questions about higher education and some related social and political issues.

- Governing board members were substantially more likely than presidents to feel that colleges and universities have become more open to diverse points of view, while presidents were more likely to believe that the degree of openness is about the same (Q47).

**Table 25: Openness to Diverse Points of View on College Campuses:
Governing Board Members and Institution Presidents**

Change in Openness	Board Members	Presidents
More open	45.7%	30.8%
Less open	20.2%	25.3%
About the same	27.7%	40.1%
Uncertain	5.5%	2.4%
<i>Not Reported</i>	0.9%	1.6%

- Board members and presidents gave somewhat differing ratings to the importance of various criteria for college admissions, though they rank-ordered them fairly similarly (ranks within each group shown in parentheses) (Q48).

**Table 26: Importance Ratings of Various Admissions Criteria:
Governing Board Members and Institution Presidents**

Admissions Criterion	Board Members	Presidents
Unusual talent in the arts	2.97 (1)	2.89 (3)
Low socioeconomic status	2.80 (2)	3.07 (1)
Ability to pay full tuition	2.79 (3)	2.48 (4)
Race/ethnicity	2.73 (4)	3.02 (2)
Legacy	2.58 (5)	2.31 (6)
Gender	2.38 (6)	2.44 (5)
Athletic ability	2.37 (7)	2.27 (7)

Scale: 1 = No Role at All in College Admissions to 5 = A Very Great Role

In terms of the ratings, presidents gave significantly higher ratings than board members to two diversity criteria (low socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity). Governing board members gave significantly higher ratings to legacy, athletic ability, and the ability to pay full tuition. (Ratings on gender and unusual talent in the arts did not differ significantly.) While the rankings within each group are essentially similar, the differences suggest that presidents and board members could find themselves on somewhat different pages with respect to admissions policies. These differences become more important in tuition-driven institutions where the entering class must be of a certain size (and tuition discounting no more than a certain amount) for the institution to maintain a solid financial footing.

Among the board members, alumni gave a significantly higher rating to legacy than non-alumni did (Table 3.32h).

- Finally, both governing board members and presidents were asked for their views on six controversial statements. The statements are shown below in order of most to least difference in the views of the two groups (Q49).

**Table 27a: Opinions on Controversial Statements:
Governing Board Members and Institution Presidents – Big Time Athletics**

“Big-time college athletics programs are more of a liability than asset.”

	Board Members	Presidents
Agree	35.2%	59.4%
Disagree	40.0%	26.6%
No Opinion	22.0%	12.2%
<i>Not Reported</i>	2.8%	1.8%

Presidents are overwhelmingly more likely to view big time athletics as a liability. Board members are substantially more likely to disagree or to have no opinion on this matter.

**Table 27b: Opinions on Controversial Statements:
Governing Board Members and Institution Presidents – Student Drinking**

“Colleges and universities should not be held legally responsible for the consequences of excessive student drinking.”

	Board Members	Presidents
Agree	36.4%	45.5%
Disagree	52.1%	42.0%
No Opinion	9.4%	9.2%
<i>Not Reported</i>	2.1%	3.3%

Presidents are more likely than governing board members to agree with this statement. They are apparently less willing to be legally required to act *in loco parentis*.

**Table 27c: Opinions on Controversial Statements:
Governing Board Members and Institution Presidents – Faculty Tenure**

“Tenure for faculty members should be replaced by a system of long-term contracts.”

	Board Members	Presidents
Agree	56.2%	53.4%
Disagree	25.9%	39.4%
No Opinion	15.4%	5.6%
<i>Not Reported</i>	2.4%	1.6%

While the percentages that agree about replacing tenure are not very different, presidents are much more likely to disagree and board members are substantially more likely to have no opinion.

**Table 27d: Opinions on Controversial Statements:
Governing Board Members and Institution Presidents – Rising Tuition**

“There is little that colleges and universities can do about rising tuition costs.”

	Board Members	Presidents
Agree	22.1%	29.7%
Disagree	73.7%	66.9%
No Opinion	2.4%	1.3%
<i>Not Reported</i>	1.8%	2.1%

Although the majority of both groups disagree with this statement, presidents are more likely than board members to agree that there is little that can be done about rising tuition costs.

**Table 27e: Opinions on Controversial Statements:
Governing Board Members and Institution Presidents – Merit Aid**

“Colleges and universities should award merit aid to shape the incoming class, even if it means there is less money available for need-based financial aid.”

	Board Members	Presidents
Agree	39.6%	46.1%
Disagree	50.6%	47.1%
No Opinion	7.4%	4.5%
<i>Not Reported</i>	2.4%	2.4%

Presidents are more likely to have an opinion on this issue and are somewhat more likely to favor the use of merit aid to shape the incoming class.

**Table 27f: Opinions on Controversial Statements:
Governing Board Members and Institution Presidents – Accountability**

“Colleges and universities should be held more accountable for their students’ educational outcomes.”

	Board Members	Presidents
Agree	76.5%	74.5%
Disagree	16.2%	20.5%
No Opinion	5.1%	3.1%
<i>Not Reported</i>	2.1%	1.8%

The differences on this last question are small. Though about three-quarters of both groups agree, presidents are slightly more likely to disagree.

INSIGHTS FROM GOVERNING BOARD MEMBERS' FINAL COMMENTS

Survey participants were asked, “Is there anything else you would like to tell us concerning serving on a college or university board or issues facing colleges and universities today?” Their responses fell into the following broad topic categories (shown in descending order of frequency):

- board functioning;
- the positive experience of serving on the board;
- students;
- academics;
- faculty/staff;
- institutional finances;
- cost to students;
- diversity; and
- free speech/political correctness.

Board Functioning

“It would be helpful to be able to provide new board members with a professionally prepared booklet describing an explanation of enrollment, budgetary, shared governance and other issues as most citizens are not familiar with these important issues and how they are often handled on the college campus as opposed to business, etc. Needs to be prepared by an independent third party...”

“Boards tend to focus on what they can readily understand which is usually operational details as opposed to strategic issues. Very few Board members have the knowledge needed to understand the financial status of an institution. They must rely on the honesty of the President and any expertise of other board members.”

“Large boards often result in cliques of those in the know and those not; those with valued opinions and those not.”

“The role of president can not be underestimated [sic] in what happens to an institution be it good or bad. [He or she] has influence on the type of board that is elected and how well issues are identified and dealt with. It really all starts at the top. Someone with vision and good leadership skills is critical. Preparing the board for having a real meaningful role in what happens to a university also makes a difference in the feeling of 'ownership' of the problem and solution. Selecting people who reflect the university's goals and mission makes the difference between an effective board and one that does not make a difference.”

“A strong, informed board that is clear about its role and responsibilities is one of the most important factors in a president's success and keeping the Board in such a condition as people come and go is challenging.”

AGB does a very good job in offering courses for incoming and continuing board members. I wish this service was available to other nonprofit boards.

“I wish there was a way to 'register' on a national list of interested potential Board members so that those of us who desire to serve on more, or a different, Board(s) would not be overlooked.”

The Positive Experience of Serving on the Board

“Serving on the Board of my University has proven to be a most rewarding and educational experience. I am hopeful that my work in the private sector will be helpful to the University.”

Students

“Students should be treated as adults, which includes holding them responsible for their behavior (social and academic).”

“The incoming students are our country’s future; we have to do everything possible, within reason, to ensure their success.”

“A college or university should equip students to succeed in a global economy. It should also instill in them certain values about giving back to the community. These institutions should not coddle students.”

Academics

“Standing up for academic freedom can sometimes undermine public relations and development efforts.”

“Universities should give more curricular care in determining what students need to know as contrasted with filling the curriculum with what students think they need to know.”

“The revolution in information technology requires reexamination of how we conduct the educational processes.”

“Colleges need to address how they can best deliver an education in the 21st century. Is on-campus instruction the best method? Is distance education better or is the combination of these the best?”

Faculty/Staff

“Boards need to find a way, appropriate to their institution, to hold the faculty's feet to the fire to ensure imagination in the service of educational excellence.”

“University staff at times view school as ‘theirs’ and try to go around [the] board.”

“These questions are not necessarily black and white. i.e.: students have a responsibility as well as the institution for accountability of their education; aid should be awarded for both

scholarship and financial need. The tenure question is tricky, but I believe it works well when there is a stringent continuing review system in place. [Underscoring in original.]

“The tenure system in higher education is a significant obstacle in enhancing the educational quality in many institutions and in the country overall. It should be outlawed or significantly revised.”

Institutional Finances

“The most heavily endowed institutions should consider investing some of their financial resources in colleges with smaller endowments which are willing to support the mission of the sending institution and invite the President to serve as a Board member.”

”Merit aid and need-based aid have to be balanced, not necessarily equally, but both are important in my university’s environment.”

Cost of compliance with federal and state mandates that have no bearing or benefit to the vast majority of students.

Fund raising is difficult and challenging for tuition driven private universities with minimal endowments in place.

Cost to Students

“Rapidly rising tuitions are helping to widen the social divide, leaving so many folks behind, the nation is becoming weaker. We need to solve this problem, and make college affordable to all--perhaps more public funds.”

“High cost and high debt for students graduating in fields where the pay is low.”

Diversity

“How to address diversity issues including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues.”

“I feel colleges/universities are hyper concerned with diversity, which by itself is of little value. Quality people without regard to diversity, for or against would be of greater value to the institution.”

“There must be better diversity on staff and in leadership roles. Student admissions should give greater support to the socially/economically challenged and not just ethnic diversity, if at all.”

Free Speech/Political Correctness

“Political correctness and ideological teaching are major and serious problems in all of American higher education. We need to return to education as the search for truth and enable students to engage in that search without pressing upon them the political and social beliefs of individual faculty members.”

Other Comments

A few notable comments did not easily fit into the categories listed above.

“Global competition places new responsibilities on Board members to assure that students graduate with skills that will allow the student to compete in a work force that is increasingly challenged to perform better, quicker, for less.”

“My comment on 'Big-time college athletics' refers to NCAA large school football and basketball programs and coaches...It is outrageous that coaches and staff are paid 1 million dollar plus contracts. The money controls the Universities. A complete and fundamental change is needed with the NCAA--it needs to be taken back and controlled in some manner by university presidents and board. The money is corrupting the educational process...”

“'University' status has been conferred on countless colleges in the past several years with no clear definition of the term or description of changes in academic programs that justified the change. The term 'university' seems to be applied willy-nilly, making it difficult for trustees to vote responsibly for or against a change.”

“Certainly this is a time where great changes are coming to higher education and dealing with change has never been more important. It is critical to know what distinctives make your institution great.”

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

There are many important areas to consider about the work of college and university governing boards. For example, although board members gave a favorable overall rating to how well their board accomplishes its duties, they gave only lukewarm ratings to some key operational areas: orientation and training of new board members, procedures for evaluating the performance of board members, and procedures for removing board members. They also did not give a very enthusiastic rating to their own ability to obtain and provide financial support for their institution (3.9 on a five-point scale).

The opportunity to compare the perspectives of board members with those of the presidents surveyed in our 2005 survey has been invaluable. From these comparisons emerges what we believe is the single most significant finding: **the relationships between presidents and their boards are more critical than we had imagined in determining the vitality of an institution, the effectiveness of its governance structure, and the success of its President.** And it all starts at the time when board members first encounter the governance structure, during their very first days on the job.

There is a remarkable asymmetry between the self-reported preparedness of presidents and board members. Presidents say they are “very well prepared” for their jobs only 41% of the time, while board members say that they are “very well prepared” a much more sobering 15% of the time. On the other end of the scale, presidents state that they are “slightly” or “not at all well prepared” only 12% of the time, while board members place themselves in one of these two categories 40% of the time. These differences have serious ramifications.

Board members generally report a good relationship with their president and a low incidence of communication problems. However, those who, at the outset, feel less prepared to be governing board members are significantly more likely to experience communication problems with their presidents and are substantially less likely to report an excellent working relationship with those presidents.

Those who felt better prepared at the outset gave higher grades to the board’s orientation programs for new board members than did the less well-prepared members. Ironically, board officers and longer-serving members are *less* likely to feel that they were well prepared for their first governing board membership. Officers and longer-serving members may have a better sense of the depth and breadth of the requirements of board work and may realize (in retrospect) how ill-prepared they were when they first began.

As one might expect, we found that board members who felt the best prepared also reported a higher level of job satisfaction. And, as part of this seamless web, there is a very strong relationship between a board member's job satisfaction and his/her perceived relationship with the institution's president: 81% of the "highly satisfied" board members, but only 48% of the less satisfied board members, report an "excellent" relationship with their president. Not surprisingly, the most satisfied board members also report more frequent communications with their presidents. Perhaps the better prepared board members more actively seek out communications with their presidents.

So, success or failure of a governance system and a relationship between a president and his/her board could very well be predetermined by the earliest communications, going as far back as board orientation. Ongoing, meaningful communication from the president to the board is perhaps the best insurance against the deterioration of that crucial relationship.

There were data in the presidents' study to suggest that it is not only board members who come ill-prepared to engage in an optimal partnership. Only about 15% of the 764 presidents of four-year colleges and universities in our study have themselves served as board members of other colleges and universities where they were not then the sitting president. This statistic points to an enormous lost opportunity, both for institutions which could benefit greatly from the talent and wisdom of presidents on their boards, AND for presidents who need to understand (from the point of view of their board members) how daunting it is for someone to first encounter the complex higher education governance structure. How many colleges and universities in this country today know who among their alumni serve (or have served) as presidents elsewhere, let alone take the next step and invite those presidents to serve on the boards of their *alma maters*?

Ironies abound in trying to understand the dynamics of the relationship between a president and his/her board. We were surprised to learn from the presidents' study that presidents themselves rated "having a balanced budget" and "meeting fund-raising goals" very highly as criteria in evaluating the success of their presidencies. Many of us surmised that this was due principally to increasing pressure from more fiscally prudent and conservative board members to manage colleges the way boards managed their businesses. But when we asked board members to provide the same ratings of presidential success criteria, they gave substantially lower ratings than the presidents to these financial criteria and to "size and quality of the freshman class." Board members matched the ratings of the presidents on "excellent quality of educational programs" and on softer criteria such as "faculty/staff morale," "town/gown relations," and "favorable publicity." It is notable that the single measure of presidential success which board members ranked significantly MORE important than the presidents did was "improved *US News* Ratings."

When board members were asked to indicate how likely various factors were to cost a president his/her job, "keeping information from the board" was cited as much more influential than critical fiscal measures such as "failure to balance the budget" and

“failure to meet fund-raising goals.” Furthermore, though the overall level of the ratings was not high, board members gave higher ratings than the presidents to the ability to pay full tuition, legacy, and (to a slight degree) athletic ability when considering admissions criteria; and, with respect to legacies, this is especially true of members who are alumni. When asked about issues at their institution, board members were less worried than presidents about enrollment management matters such as meeting student enrollment goals and retention. Finally, board members are not as concerned as presidents about one of the greatest crises facing higher education (as seen in the March, 2006, *Chronicle* survey on how well prepared high school graduates are for college)—“insufficient academic preparation for college among students.”¹¹

We should not oversimplify these findings by concluding that presidents are thinking about the singularly important issues facing their colleges while board members are not. Board members do indeed express concern about these matters—but at an apparently lower level of urgency and with less focus than their presidents.

There is much to be learned from these challenges to conventional wisdom about how boards and presidents think. But much of this very likely ties back to the major findings of general lack of board member preparedness, about the necessity to have a common language for communicating the complexities of higher education and its governance structure, and about the need for frequent and transparent contact between presidents and their boards.

¹¹ We know that this issue is generally more of a concern to public institutions, of which a greater proportion was represented in the presidents’ study. However, even among public trustees the rating given to this issue was lower than that given to the presidents as a whole.

TECHNICAL APPENDIX ON RESPONSE RATE ESTIMATES AND SAMPLE COMPOSITION

In this study we were not able to choose randomly which governing board members to survey. As noted earlier, presidents had to agree to forward the study invitation and then governing board members had to log on and complete the survey. Even where sampling can be done randomly it is important to know the representativeness of the sample relative to the population. The purpose of this Technical Appendix is to show how we estimated response rates and describe how we evaluated representativeness on two characteristics: institutional affiliation and U.S. Census region. Because of our two-stage recruiting process, we have addressed this question with respect to both the institutions represented and the governing board members themselves.

We began with the base of the 1,338 schools in the presidents' study (decreased by several schools that have since been closed). In the governing board study, many of the publicly supported schools were part of larger systems for which there is a single board. Thus, for this study the number of institutional entities (systems or individual institutions, as applicable) was 1,082. As described earlier (in footnote #10 on page 26), we collected updated institutional affiliations for all of the institutions from whose presidents or chancellors we invited participation. We also had the U.S. Census region data available.

Estimated Overall Response Rates

We learned which *institutions* responded in one of two ways: 1) respondents identified their school, as they were asked to do (if willing) at the very end of the survey; or 2) as requested, presidents/chancellors notified us when they had forwarded the survey invitation to their board members.¹² By these means we identified a total of 261 institutions that responded, or 24% of the total¹³. Because 272 out of the 1,478 respondents did not specify their institution, it is possible that some other institutions were represented but not identified to us.¹⁴ While the 24% response rate for institutions is therefore a minimum estimate, the "actual" institutional response rate is not likely to be much different.

As part of our work we learned the number of active, voting members of the board for each of the 1,082 systems or schools. To estimate the response rate among those who

¹² There were 10 institutions whose president or contact person notified us of their participation but which no respondents named. We cannot know for sure whether or not any board members from these institutions participated.

¹³ Of the 1,082 of the institutions, 12 had contact people who directly notified us of their intention not to participate in the study. They are counted within the non-responding institutions.

¹⁴ Of course, it is also possible that all of these 272 respondents who did not identify their institution came from the institutions already known to be represented in the sample.

presumably received the invitation we divided the number of respondents (1,478) by the total number of governing board members in the responding institutions (6,848). Therefore, the estimated response rate overall among individuals who received the invitation is 22%.

How Representative is Our Sample?

Census Region

The table below shows the number and percentage of the institutions for the overall population and the responding institutions by Census region, along with the response rate for institutions by region.

**Table A-1: Population and Sample Comparisons for Institutions:
by Census Region**

Region	Institution Population (N = 1,082)		Responding Institutions (N = 261)		Response Rate
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	
Northeast	277	25.6%	73	28.0%	26.4%
Midwest	298	27.5%	78	29.9%	26.2%
South	380	35.1%	81	31.0%	21.3%
West	127	11.7%	29	11.1%	22.8%
TOTAL	1,082		261		24.1%

The percentages of institution by region for the population are fairly closely mirrored in the responding institutions. The somewhat higher response rates for institutions in the Northeast and Midwest (both 26%) versus the South (21%) are reflected in the proportions among the responding institutions. However, the differences are relatively small.

We have not calculated the Census region for individuals, because individuals do not necessarily live where their institution is located.

Institutional Affiliation

Many of the stakeholders, governance structures, challenges, and financial issues faced by institutions differ based on their affiliation: public, private (non-denominational) or private religious. Therefore it was important to know how well our respondent samples reflected the population as a whole. The first analysis (Table A-2) shows the counts and percentages among the population of institutions and our sample.

**Table A-2: Population and Sample Comparisons for Institutions:
by Institutional Affiliation**

Affiliation	Institution Population (N = 1,082)		Responding Institutions (N = 261)		Response Rate
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	
Public	253	23.4%	74	28.4%	29.2%
Private	306	28.3%	72	27.6%	23.5%
Religious	523	48.3%	115	44.1%	22.0%
TOTAL	1,082		261		24.1%

The response rate was somewhat higher for public institutions than for both types of private institutions. In the sample, therefore, public boards are somewhat over-represented and private religious boards are somewhat underrepresented.

We also examined the composition of the sample looking at individual respondents, starting with our counts of all the active voting members of the governing boards for the population and for our responding schools.¹⁵ The “possible respondents” are those who had a possibility of completing the survey because we presume that they received the study invitation.

**Table A-3: Population and Sample Comparisons for Individuals:
by Institutional Affiliation**

Affiliation	Entire Population (in 1,082 Institutions)		Possible Respondents (in 261 Responding Institutions)		Actual Respondents (Q40 in Survey)		Response Rate (from Responding Institutions)
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	
Public	3,099	10.9%	943	13.8%	227	15.5%	24.1%
Private	9,393	32.8%	2,226	32.5%	457	31.2%	20.5%
Religious	16,063	56.3%	3,679	53.7%	783	53.4%	21.3%
TOTAL	28,555		6,848		1,467 ¹¹		21.4%

¹⁵ Eleven respondents did not indicate their institution’s affiliation and have been dropped from this analysis. Note that this slightly dropped the calculated response rate because of the slightly smaller numerator (1,467 instead of 1,468 divided by 6,848). In Table A-3 the institutional affiliation listed for the actual respondents is what they told us in the survey. In order to have the *same* data source – the information we looked up– for both “possible” and “actual” respondents, we redid the comparison based only on the 1,206 respondents who named their institution. This analysis yielded similar results to the first one: 14.2% public; 28.7% private non-denomination; and 57.2% religious.

Given the proportions of possible respondents among the participating institutions, the percentages of actual respondents in each category are remarkably close – less than two percentage points different. Even in comparison to the entire population, the percentages of institutional affiliations represented among the actual respondents differ by only 1.6 to 4.6 percentage points.

Final Comments

Taken together, these analyses by region and institutional affiliation make us confident that our sample is reasonably representative of the larger population of governing board members in the country and support our decision not to weight the data. However, as noted earlier, there are some uncertainties. For example, we cannot know that all of the *possible* respondents we have counted actually received the study invitation. (If some did not, then our actual individual response rate would be slightly higher.) In addition, it is not possible to test other possibly relevant board member characteristics such as gender.